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The chapters in this volume cover a wide range of women's post-conflict peacebuilding experiences in different parts of the world. Post-conflict situations are windows of opportunity during which gender relations can and should be rethought and which, if properly utilized, can serve as the right moment to "rewrite" the rules and practices that previously served as obstacles to the participation of women in society. Overall, our book is meant to challenge the popular and often-propagated assumption that women should be supported, empowered and given a voice merely in their roles as victims. Collectively, we provide evidence in support of the growing understanding at international, national and local levels that while – and because – women are disproportionately affected by war, they can be powerful agents of positive and sustainable change if brought on board and given the chance to participate in every aspect of a society's peacebuilding process.

We now return to some of our main analytical conclusions on how best to reconsider and correctly interpret the roles, contributions, rights and responsibilities of women in post-conflict peacebuilding. We first focus on common experiences of victimization and revictimization observed across the different chapters. These include the need to recognize and overcome multilayered post-war challenges; the political and economic exclusion generally experienced by women in post-conflict environments; the failure to address conflict-related traumas as well as continuing or new forms of gender violence in the aftermath of armed conflict; and the resulting (re)victimization of women based on gender discrimination and the

re-establishment of patriarchal norms, practices and power relationships in both private and public institutions. While international – donor-driven – efforts should be able to address missed opportunities to create space and access for women to participate actively in peacebuilding processes, weak aid effectiveness and accountability as well as incoherent and possibly even contradictory national and international agendas and objectives for post-conflict reconstruction are obstacles that prevent women's access to post-conflict rebuilding activities.

We then draw on the findings from the book chapters and highlight experiences where women have managed to move beyond victimhood to become active, acknowledged contributors to and owners of post-conflict transformation processes. The reflections developed in this section focus on women's leadership roles; women's empowerment, social cohesion and different aspects of social transformation; evidence of successful partnership with both national and international players; experiences with coping and survival strategies of women at the community level; the role of international aid in empowering women; the value of successful awareness raising, advocacy and publicity; and the need for and impact of enhancing gender equality in a society's security and justice sectors.

We conclude with a number of recommendations – drawing on the experiences shared in the chapters – for facilitating and promoting positive responses to women's places and roles in rebuilding post-conflict societies. The general recommendations focus on the need to enhance women's political participation and empowerment. This includes efforts to increase and assure their effective representation at all levels and in all activities; the need to assure and enhance the physical security of women; and efforts to raise awareness among all stakeholders in peacebuilding about the potential for women to serve as agents of peaceful change in post-conflict transitions. Moreover, women need to be assured of access to economic resources. This requires efforts to push ahead with grassroots economic strategies to empower women on their own or in family units; the introduction and support of micro-credit programmes for women; the promotion of labour, land and property rights for women, including through legal reform; and the integration of women into the transformation and management of post-war security institutions. Specific recommendations cover the need to address war and post-war distress, including through faith-based institutions, indigenous healing ceremonies, truth and reconciliation mechanisms and other such locally relevant methods for assisting traumatized populations; to build coalitions and prepare for peaceful transformation and prevention of violent conflict; and the crucial necessity to work with men – both adults who effectively hold power in society and young men who hope for positive generational change in terms of men's attitudes towards women as equal partners, not inferior

bystanders – in building and managing post-conflict societies. We close with some recommendations for international state and local actors, including the United Nations, regional organizations and bilateral donors, but also national governments, civil society organizations and national and international research communities.

Common experiences and recommendations for change

The chapters in this volume focus on the experiences, contributions and roles played by women in post-conflict reconstruction. Women are portrayed in their full complexity: not simply as helpless or innocent victims, but as both victims and active agents of change.

Interactions among members of post-war societies are characterized by new doubts and old concerns about prevailing hierarchical relationships between genders and age groups; and, most importantly, by crucial opportunities to reopen debates about marginalized, thus vulnerable, groups' safety and access to political and economic resources in the critical immediate post-conflict phase. The reflections from different parts of the world draw our attention to the differing dynamics of participation as they play out in various local, national and international settings. Most contributors agree that active facilitation and cooperation by all actors, whether local or international, are crucial in engaging and supporting women in the transformation of all aspects of a post-conflict society.

Although the following findings, recommendations and suggestions draw on a limited sample of conflict and post-conflict experiences, many are worth considering in a variety of other post-conflict and violence-afflicted contexts. Thus each case is relevant beyond its own context and its lessons will likely resonate with the challenges faced and opportunities for change offered in other settings.

Women as victims in conflict and post-conflict environments

During the past decade international and national players have made extensive progress in mainstreaming gender in peacebuilding activities, such as through gender analysis programmes, by focusing on gender equity or with attempts at institutionalizing gender inclusion (Chapter 2). However, these remarkable advancements met with many obstacles and difficulties. While there is a committed network of individuals and institutions that are dedicated to moving a pro-women peacebuilding agenda forward, widespread ignorance of women's right to equality, a refusal to address violence against women and obstruction of women's peace efforts are still real constraints (Chapter 2). The chapters in this volume point to

a great number of specific challenges that are characteristic of post-conflict environments (see Chapter 1) and resonate strongly throughout the various case studies. They are detrimental to, but also highlight the need for, creative and feasible solutions to give women more just and meaningful roles, even in the most adverse political, economic and cultural environments.

Political exclusion of women

The absence – and purposeful exclusion – of women in peace negotiations is a common phenomenon in the post-conflict world. Post-conflict processes continue to serve the interests of male-dominated parties and tend to overlook the needs and interests of women, as if they were a special interest group or simply one of many vulnerable groups rather than half or more of society. Despite an international discourse proclaiming that their views are important, women continue to be excluded from peace talks and all other stages of the process. Moreover, women and men are often trapped within patriarchal cultural norms that cause people to prefer to be represented by a man. Women might be considered electorally only if there is no suitable male candidate, while those female candidates who argue from a patriarchal perspective are more likely to be accepted than women who represent the views of other women (Chapter 12). Structural efforts at the local and national levels to overcome this challenge remain operationally weak. At present, whether women will be seen as partners or not depends much more on the personal convictions of individual actors than on a systematic implementation of policies of gender inclusion. Yet individuals with the authority, willingness and diplomatic skill to trigger changes in attitudes and behaviours towards the treatment of women as equal peacebuilding partners remain exceptional in all current peacebuilding operations.

While representatives of international organizations should be much more proactive, regrettably they often remain unreliable due to either ignorance, neglect, a misguided sense of respect for local ownership or their own unexamined prejudice. They rarely enforce their posturing on women's inclusion when it comes to negotiations in reality. For instance, in her discussion of the Taëf Agreement (1989) in Lebanon, Kari Karamé (Chapter 12) notes that even though the negotiation of the agreement was supported by the United Nations and the United States, only men were invited to the negotiation table. As Vanessa Farr shows in Chapter 11, more than 20 years later, "Contrary to the clear directives given in SCR 1325 to include women in all aspects of decision-making in a conflict zone, Palestinian women are routinely excluded from all high-level negotiations on the Israel-Palestine question – by Palestinian males, the state of Israel and the international community." The cases of Burundi

and Tajikistan indicate that male-dominated political institutions were re-luctant to delegate authority and responsibility to women during negotia-tions, as issues of war and peace were considered to be "men's issues" (see Chapters 5 and 7). In neither case did international actors override these attitudes in favour of honouring their own stated commitments to advance women's inclusion. These experiences show that unless inter-national actors are ready and willing to promote aggressively the norms now enshrined in lofty statements and reports by the UN Security Coun-cil and Secretary-General, for instance, nothing will change.

Economic and security exclusion of women

In post-conflict environments in particular, women tend to face greater economic problems than men because of their disadvantaged status. Women without direct protection of adult men, including widows, second or unofficial wives, unmarried mothers and single women, are particularly often denied legal rights to land and other resources that were previously owned by their deceased husbands, fathers or other close male relatives. Often they are also unable to engage in productive economic activities and, along with their dependent children, elderly or sick under their care, subsequently suffer from abject poverty and deprivation (Chapter 3). Marginalized by their community, some women support polygamy in the often-vain hope that it will offer protection for themselves and their chil-dren (Chapter 7).

   Similar dynamics are at play in a nation's security institutions. Recruit-ment practices often fail to reach out to pools of qualified and interested female candidates, as is demonstrated by strikingly low rates of female participation within many of the institutions of the security sector, includ-ing the police services and armed forces. Even when women do gain access, they face considerable difficulties in coping with discrimination, harassment and violence, all of which pose formidable barriers to women's retention and promotion. Creating representative security sec-tor institutions where men and women participate equally at all levels of decision-making is a challenge, particularly in institutions where men tra-ditionally tend to be greatly overrepresented (Chapter 13).

Failure to address trauma, health issues and post-conflict gender violence

Many women are physically disabled and psychologically traumatized by the wounds of war crimes, which continue to haunt them long after the end of armed violence. The international community has supported some modest programmes for reproductive health and dealing with psy-chological trauma, for instance in Bosnia, Cambodia and Rwanda. How-ever, such programmes usually only managed to reach a small fraction of the suffering women and no precise information is available on their

effectiveness. As the treatment of traumatized women is labour-intensive, costly and often misunderstood, poor countries lack the resources, institutional infrastructure and cultural and social capacities to provide such services on a large scale and in a sustainable manner (Chapter 3).

In addition, violence and harassment against women continue in the aftermath of armed conflict. The cases from South Africa, Rwanda and Sierra Leone show that there is an explicit acceptance of peacetime gender-based violence. While wartime rape is increasingly seen as a crime and thus usually prohibited, everyday violence against women in peacetime is not (Chapter 9). Equally, even though rape is now recognized in the Statute of the International Criminal Court as a war crime and crime against humanity, domestic violence is not distinctively recognized as prosecutable under international criminal law. Moreover, in many countries the definition of domestic violence in national criminal justice systems remains ambiguous, such as in East Timor and Cambodia (Chapter 4). As domestic and sexual violence and harassment tend to proliferate during the immediate aftermath of armed conflicts, women are further victimized at an already particularly challenging time.

"Revictimization" based on gender

After war, patterns of gender discrimination and segregation that existed prior to the outbreak of armed violence are often reproduced. In some cases the worst aspects of the male-dominated cultural norms can be rebuilt, such as polygamy, early arranged marriages and segregation. According to Sharipova and De Soto (Chapter 7), the Tajikistan case demonstrates that the "gendered cultural and religious patriarchal traditions, suppressed during the Soviet era, have enjoyed a resurgence and had negative effects for women".

Often, women are seen as victims and passive recipients of benign local and international support; but if, during the course of the conflict, they gained access to previously male-owned institutions, they are also seen as a significant threat to male power. It is also clear that the rhetoric may change without much institutional change being felt on the ground. For example, especially in the aftermath of high-profile mass crimes, human rights are likely to be universally emphasized and appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks established. This is a positive development. Yet such rights – and particularly women's rights – are unlikely to be rigorously enforced by law enforcement agencies, as the institutions and personnel that are meant to safeguard human rights are in reality very difficult to change, especially in traditional societies where women have not previously enjoyed social and political equality (Chapter 3).

In countries such as South Africa, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, where male supremacy, dominance and aggression are widespread, women con-

tinue to suffer gender-specific human rights violations. As Lyn Graybill argues, "The systematic subordination of women and entrenched social attitudes that preceded those periods of conflict made the notion of women's *bodies as battlefields* acceptable. Women's bodies continue to be sites of struggle" (Chapter 9). Among the reasons for this problem is the pattern of normalization of violent male behaviour during the years of conflict as a legitimate way to reach socio-economic and political goals – little is done to challenge or change this reality in the aftermath. As a result, private, domestic gender-based violence and the use of violent rhetoric or actual political repression by leaders are far too often seen as acceptable male behaviour by both women and men.

In a post-conflict process, some new forms of patriarchy and gender order may develop. As violence against women and children continues to flourish in a post-war environment, sex trafficking, sexual exploitation and prostitution challenge peacebuilding and recovery efforts (Chapters 4 and 7). It is not only in public institutions run by men and in male attitudes, however, that transformation is difficult and slow. In some cases where there are efforts to reform policing and justice delivery in women's favour, women prefer to cling to the past, colluding in their own victimization by sacrificing themselves to protect their male relatives. An example from post-conflict Tajikistan tells of women who willingly took responsibility for crimes of drug trafficking and murder that were committed by their husbands and sons (Chapter 7).

Lack of cohesion between international and national agendas and mandates

There is little cohesion and insufficient collaboration among national and international players, which greatly impedes cooperation on peacebuilding activities and empowerment of women. For instance, in East Timor and Cambodia the situation of women is challenged by, among other things, an incoherent introduction of international human rights standards and the lack of consolidation with national and local judicial structures. Unilateral introduction of international standards without the human and financial resources to implement them creates confusion and tempts local populations to revert back to customary practices, as these promise faster and more predictable responses (Chapter 4).

Although the establishment of gender units in peacekeeping missions or national governments was intended to enhance the promotion of gender equality in international and national decision-making processes, in reality they may have marginalized the agendas of women and children by creating weak agencies without adequate authority, capacity, financing and expertise. At the same time the existence of such units appears to have created the impression that other relevant offices and

institutions are freed from responsibility for addressing the needs of women and children within their mandates and activities (Chapter 4).

Achievements in moving beyond victimhood and towards respecting the agency of women as peacebuilders

These continuing challenges aside, over the last two to three decades there have been positive developments that allow women to play more just and meaningful roles as peace agents in official post-conflict peace-building activities. These changes are being supported by both national and international actors, and some could be emulated in other contexts. The following observations highlight some of these positive and replicable experiences.

Women's leadership roles

The value of women's leadership in conflict management and peacebuilding is increasingly visible and recognized in public and official debates and publications. One of the main messages in the volume is that the need for women's equal share of leadership positions in post-conflict activities is overlooked at both international and national levels. Yet even in adverse political, economic and cultural environments and despite a lack of government support and/or international assistance, in many post-war areas women's grassroots groups have consolidated their peacebuilding efforts at local and national levels. When governments are unwilling or unable to address issues of importance to the survival of women in post-conflict societies, women's peace activism and reconstruction efforts, focusing on self-help, mutual support and survival, are the only spaces in which the interests and rights of women and other marginalized groups are discussed (Chapter 5).

There are numerous field stories about peace initiatives of women which are bridging ethnic and religious divides in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. In Burundi, female peace activists initiated a safe space for inter-ethnic dialogue (Chapter 5). A different inter-ethnic dialogue was initiated in Macedonia by a programme called Lifestart in Emergencies, where female victims of violence contributed to conflict prevention activities at the community level (Chapter 8). In Lebanon, which is divided into sectarian zones, Muslim and Christian women initiated pacifist movements to meet from both sides of the demarcation line in Beirut, triggering the anger of the dominating militias (Chapter 12). The Kenya Women's Peace Forum meets regularly to evaluate and discuss how national policies and events affect women in the country. In addition, Kenyan women's groups played important roles in organizing women voters to support female candidates and create a relatively

violence-free election in 2002 (Chapter 3). In the occupied Palestinian territory, women are finding ways to achieve reconciliation between the two main political factions as a means to restore national unity (Chapter 11).

In immediate post-war situations, women's networks and organizations are often the only places where women can go for support, education, protection, shelter or to escape violence, forced marriages and other risks, as well as to provide support for other women. For instance, in Afghanistan women's organizations have been providing a multitude of services that would otherwise be unavailable in many rural areas. They have been running independent girls schools, income-generation programmes, healthcare training and legal aid clinics (Chapter 3).

Women's economic empowerment and social cohesion

Micro-credit programmes supported by multilateral donors have proved successful in empowering women at the community level. Such programmes often aim to support the struggle for survival of poor and widowed single heads of households and abused women in hostile post-conflict environments (Chapters 3 and 6). Many micro-credit programmes bring together women from different ethnic and religious groups and afford them access to financial loans to start up small businesses. In addition, the informal interactions within these groups have therapeutic value. In Rwanda, for instance, women's groups included both Tutsi and Hutu women, who helped each other in rebuilding their traumatized lives (Chapter 3).

Joint economic and social activities also have a preventive dynamic. In the Balkans joint economic activities of women effectively bridged post-conflict divides in society. Good practices include Yugoslavian and Macedonian cases. Women teamed up for the Lifestart in Emergencies initiative in isolated, ethnically divided regions of Macedonia and learned to overcome mistrust and bridge ethnic divides for the sake of their children. The programmes had a positive influence on them and their male and female relatives, inspiring them to develop relationships with men and women from other groups. Such economic programmes have positive impacts in many areas because of their non-confrontational character and ability to foster confidence. Aimed at providing a better future for their families and children, the programmes served as effective, non-threatening entry points for women to address socially and culturally sensitive issues, such as domestic and inter-community violence (Chapters 6 and 8).

A sole reliance on male relatives for peace and economic security does not guarantee women's and families' survival; the contributions by women, in family units or alone, are crucially important. In Burundi many

of the women's associations were formed by those who decided to focus on reclaiming their own sense of identity, reviving dormant skills and engaging in a number of activities that were conducive to personal healing and economic productivity (Chapter 5).

Successful partnerships of national and international players

The international community and national actors have made praiseworthy progress in mainstreaming gender concerns in post-conflict reconstruction. The ground-breaking UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 (2000) has generated many hopes for a gender-sensitive approach to post-conflict reconstruction across the world. The resolution was an important landmark in the recognition of women as peace agents. Although a number of states ignore SCR 1325, it has become popular in the last decade (Chapter 10). In addition, SCR 1820 (2008) focuses on the prevention of sexual violence in war. However, it takes a more limited view of sexual violence and the victimhood of women, and narrows the geographic focus and agenda of SCR 1325. In fact it risks diluting existing international law, limits the number of countries on the Security Council's agenda and thus threatens the full implementation of SCR 1325 (Chapters 1 and 10).

Numerous UN agencies, in partnership with other international and national stakeholders, made a difference in empowering women as resourceful agents of peace. Particularly UNIFEM and several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have advocated for women's inclusion in all aspects of peacebuilding (Chapter 10). Furthermore, on a regional level the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa, for instance, has adopted a regional gender policy to enhance the role of women in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.

Coping and survival strategies of women at the community level

In parallel with actions initiated by governments, civil society organizations and international actors, local communities continue to address war and post-war trauma in time-honoured and traditional ways. Particularly in a post-conflict environment, women and men continue to appreciate the value of peaceful religious practices and indigenous traditions of mutual support. The importance and contributions of traditional responses to war and post-war suffering are often overlooked. The chapters in this volume report on a wide variety of faith-based and cultural practices of survival. In Cambodia, for instance, traumatized women visit Buddhist temples for relief through meditation (Chapter 3). In many tribal areas in Africa, local healers provide help to distressed women. In Lebanon, Muslim and Christian women initiated "pacifist movements

that tried to meet from both sides of the demarcation line in Beirut" (Chapter 12).

Experience shows that despite the trauma of war and violence, women are less likely to resort to destructive measures, such as violent retaliation, than men. Instead, more often than not they focus on productive approaches to survival – and thus to constructive peacebuilding. For instance, in Burundi women were proactively engaged in peacebuilding at the grassroots level, where they are not considered to be threatening national and state power structures and are thus free to become socially and politically active. Associations, community groups and social movements offer a much-needed space for social and psychological healing (Chapter 5).

Again drawing on the experience in Burundi, the survival strategies employed by women were often so subtle that even well-intentioned practitioners and academics failed to recognize their critical role in peacebuilding. Women's creative, practical and non-violent approaches to peacebuilding focused less on "victimization" and more on survival strategies and reconstruction initiatives, which enhanced their capacity for serving as effective peace players (Chapter 5).

International aid to empower women

Many field studies show a positive relationship between foreign aid and the empowerment of women. The international community has supported women's organizations in post-conflict societies in order to channel humanitarian assistance and empower women. In many countries, such as Bosnia, Cambodia, El Salvador and Rwanda, women's organizations have used such assistance to support the rehabilitation of female victims of mass crimes and the promotion of women's economic and political rights. However, as Vanessa Farr shows in her case study of the occupied Palestinian territory (Chapter 11), if women's organizations are afraid to touch politically sensitive issues for fear of becoming "politicized" (or being perceived as such by political authorities and donors), they lose their ability to function as advocates for women's rights. She thus argues that "The donor community ... needs to recognize and overcome its tendency to disempower, even if not intentionally, women's organizations and develop more effective funding responses that value and encourage women's public political participation."

Successful awareness raising, advocacy and publicity

Post-conflict settings present new prospects for the participation of women in the political arena. Often, post-war democratic constitutions provide formal equality between men and women. As a result of their

increased involvement in public life during and after conflict, some women not only acquire leadership skills and experience but also become keenly aware of their political rights and responsibilities (Chapters 3 and 8).

International and national awareness-raising initiatives and advocacy have encouraged general public and government perceptions of women as peace agents. Due to international advocacy and pressure in Afghanistan, for instance, in 2002 female candidates gained 160 seats in the 1,451-strong tribal council, the Emergency Loya Jirga. The UN Mission in Afghanistan included a gender adviser and the interim government established a ministry of women's affairs, similar to the practices in post-war East Timor and Cambodia (Chapter 4).

In many post-conflict contexts, discriminatory DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) processes reduce the possibility to recruit female ex-combatants into newly formed security sector institutions. In Liberia, for instance, an initial needs assessment estimated that there were approximately 2,000 female combatants who qualified for DDR, but were not given an opportunity to take part. Following an awareness-raising campaign by women's groups that encouraged women and girls to participate in the DDR process, eventually 22,370 women and 2,440 girls were disarmed and demobilized (Chapter 13).

In many cases, growing publicity about the situation of women triggers responses by the national government. In Sierra Leone, for instance, activists were able to take the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report and lobby effectively for the passage of a number of gender-focused bills (Chapter 9).

Enhanced gender equality in security institutions

The Vienna-based UN Commission for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice drafted a resolution in 1997 to enhance gender equality in the area of criminal justice systems. Taken up by the General Assembly in December of the same year, it provides guidance on a wide range of issues, including criminal procedures, police powers, sentencing and corrections, and victim support and assistance (Chapter 4).

Although employment within security institutions is traditionally viewed as men's work, women are both qualified for and – sometimes contrary to popular belief – very much interested in these positions. Within many post-conflict countries, employment within the security sector can provide financial and job security, both of which are highly appealing to women, just as they are to men (Chapter 13). Moreover, making security institutions and the services they provide more representative of and relevant to all parts of the post-conflict societies they serve necessitates the integration of women.

General recommendations for change

Enhancing political participation and empowerment

Increase political representation of women!

During times of conflict, many women acquire leadership skills and experiences. They become aware of their political rights and the responsibilities they can and should shoulder in post-conflict settings (Chapter 3). Post-war constitutions and laws should thus provide for formal gender equality and the legal underpinning for assuring women's right and duty to participate in the political life of society.

Both international and national actors should encourage women's participation in political affairs. Modest and sometimes symbolic steps taken to increase women's access and participation should translate into more significant and visible decision-making roles. Programmes need to be developed to facilitate greater representation of women in post-conflict elections, to assist female candidates in subsequent elections on a non-partisan basis and to support women's advocacy organizations engaged in promoting women's participation in local and national affairs (Chapter 3). Especially in male-dominated political cultures, some women have a negative attitude towards political activities and prefer not to engage in politics, choosing instead to become actively involved in the work of NGOs (Chapter 12). Consulting with NGOs in general and women's NGOs in particular may thus offer opportunities to reach women who are willing to play more active roles in society. However, as Farr shows, this presupposes that women's NGOs are free to participate in sensitive political debates without fear of suppression and the risk of scaring women away from participation (Chapter 11).

When attempting to raise women's representation in political, economic and social life, it is important to avoid simplistic applications of gender quotas. While quotas might offer short-term solutions, they do not address the underlying reasons for the absence of women from positions of power and influence. However, it is very useful to incorporate a gender dimension at the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of peacebuilding programmes and projects. The objective of gender-sensitive peacebuilding programme design and implementation is not merely to raise the number of women involved, but to gain an understanding of the similarities and differences between the needs, priorities and contributions of women and men, thus breaking down outdated and discriminatory stereotypes and attitudes (Chapter 3).

For instance, when post-conflict reconstruction focuses almost exclusively on rebuilding physical infrastructure, the "social infrastructure"

tends to be overlooked. More often than not it is women who highlight and prioritize the need to rebuild such social infrastructure, including health, education, public housing and protection of the environment. The Lebanese experience tells us that primarily female government ministers lobbied for investments in social infrastructure, thus addressing a crucial peacebuilding challenge that would have otherwise gone unnoticed (Chapter 12).

Include women in peacemaking and peacebuilding processes!

Peacebuilding consultations should take advantage of – and learn from – the survival and coping strategies of women who have managed their own lives and the lives of their families and communities in the midst of tensions, armed violence and their aftermath (Chapter 11). Both international and national actors should pay greater attention to the voices and experiences of women peacemakers and support their initiatives (Chapter 5). Their experiences should inform the planning of peacebuilding programmes. Equal contribution of men and women from the planning to the implementation of peacebuilding programmes is a precondition for enhancing the impact of local and international interventions and making the consolidation of peace increasingly just and sustainable (Chapters 2, 10 and 11). Commitments to gender equality are thus an essential requirement for peacebuilding activities. However, while one or two programmes dedicated to the inclusion of women or women's organizations may show symbolic goodwill, they do not substitute for a truly participatory process that capitalizes on the contributions of women peacemakers and responds to and advances women's specific needs and experiences (Chapters 2 and 11).

Enhance the physical security of women!

National actors, bilateral and multilateral agencies, international organizations and NGOs need to formulate and implement programmes on enhancing the physical security of vulnerable populations, which, in post-conflict societies, include virtually the entire (male and female) population. Individual requirements of specific groups must be analysed, understood and considered, particularly of those groups which are marginalized in peacebuilding processes and thus prevented from fully determining their own fate and making positive contributions to their society's future. Being one of these groups, women have been marginalized and are now in need of proactive inclusion. Including these groups in programme planning and evaluation processes ensures that their requirements are properly considered. Security institutions are the official providers of security, yet often they are not trusted because of their oppressive and violent behaviour during conflict. Security sector reform

is thus an essential precondition for post-conflict reconstruction. The inclusion of women in these processes is key for ensuring that the provision of security responds adequately to security threats experienced by women and eventually giving "greater representation of women in police forces and judicial processes, training to security staff on women's rights, establishment of peace committees to prevent the eruption of violence and special interventions for vulnerable youth" (Chapter 3; see also Chapter 13).

During the post-conflict moment, violence against women must be reduced and cannot be tolerated or accepted as customary, culturally legitimate behaviour. Concerns about unacceptable behaviour towards women cannot be limited to wartime only. For example, the recognition that rape in times of conflict is wrong must lead to the recognition that violence against women in peacetime is equally unacceptable (Chapter 9).

In constructing a gender-equitable post-conflict society, health services for women and girls should be prioritized. It is important to mainstream concerns for the epidemic spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, especially in Africa (Chapters 5 and 9). So far, however, experience shows that in the aftermath of conflict the health needs of girls and women receive less priority than those of boys and men (Chapters 3 and 7).

Strengthen respect for women's human rights!

After war, international and national actors need to work hand in hand to promote women's rights – or, better, to prevent the violation of human rights in general, with particular consideration to understanding and alleviating rights violations as they concern specific groups in society, including women. They need to fund and develop awareness-raising programmes via radio, television and print media. To end cultures of impunity, comprehensive reporting systems need to be created to document abuses of women's rights and support female and civilian survivors of the war in seeking justice (Chapter 3). Following on the suggestions made in the previous section, this needs to include special training for law enforcement agencies, which play an important role in enforcing women's rights at the community level (Chapters 3 and 13).

Raise awareness about women as peace agents in post-conflict transition!

Promoting public debates and media literacy about SCRs 1325 and 1820 (and subsequent resolutions) and about national responses to these important programmes in post-conflict societies is an essential step in raising awareness about and advocating for participatory roles of women.

In order to sensitize society and national actors to issues about gender discrimination, particularly in patriarchal societies, women should be

given opportunities to voice their concerns about perceived gender injustices and translate those experiences into supporting and leading roles in transforming their society. In post-conflict reconstruction, particularly girls and women should be publicly recognized and encouraged (and, most importantly, not discouraged!) to play more active roles. This recommendation can be advanced by offering women opportunities to debate and analyse the language of SCRs such as 1325 in order to relate them to the specific conflicts in which they are caught (Chapter 11).

The media can be a powerful and influential collaborator in publicizing and advocating the end to discrimination of previously underrepresented groups of society. Some practical and potentially useful steps drawn from the case studies throughout this volume include the identification of journalists who are sympathetic to calls for women's empowerment; the pooling and sharing of media contacts in an easily accessible database; regular, targeted and concise briefings for journalists; and efforts to focus on positive angles in reporting on post-conflict developments and dynamics by offering interviews with women engaged in conflict and peace issues on the ground (Chapter 10). Moreover, strategies need to be encouraged that promote women's engagement and empowerment in utilizing the media. Stakeholders need to develop and support programmes that create awareness about women's needs and rights through radio, television and print media (Chapter 3).

Women-only forums have proven to facilitate women's participation at community and national levels. Initiatives to establish such forums need to be supported by national and international actors (Chapter 5). Particularly state actors must be convinced of the need to value, not sabotage and repress, women's organizations' intentions to participate in public debates on politically sensitive yet existential issues (Chapter 11). Such women-only spaces are important ways to build bridges between women from different identity groups, collect information about the types and effectiveness of current programmes and set priorities and strategies for addressing violence against, and the political marginalization of, women. They are safe spaces for discussion of highly personal forms of violence and the unique perspectives of women that are often not discussed in mixed-sex forums (Chapter 2).

Support training and education!

Education and training activities can prepare women and men for their roles in post-conflict societies, including the responsibility of providing leadership. Because of alarming trends in gender inequalities in education and training, which affect girls and women in a post-conflict society, the problem of unequal access to education needs to be urgently addressed (Chapters 3 and 5).

Women should be trained and educated to participate in peacebuilding activities as experts, community and national leaders, decision-makers, civil society activists and opinion leaders. Building capacity through leadership and communication skills is of strategic importance for current and potential future women leaders (Chapter 7).

Providing access to economic resources

Push ahead with women-focused economic strategies at the grassroots!

Peacebuilding programmes need to take affirmative action to ensure gender-based patterns of discrimination that prevent women's equal access to resources and political and economic opportunities in post-conflict societies will be broken (Chapters 2 and 11).

Relief agencies, NGOs and community groups should empower women to take the necessary first steps towards independent survival. The Yugoslav example of women owners of shops in post-conflict Sarajevo, Belgrade and other communities is an encouraging model. Providing small interest-free loans to qualified women and teaching them basic small-business practices are effective steps in peacebuilding equality (Chapter 6).

To ensure job security for women and avoid discrimination and nepotism in fragile transition societies, it is crucial to establish an independent review board for applicants for public sector positions. Women should not be trapped in entry-level posts as a result of traditional discrimination, everyday family duties or a lack of access to educational resources (Chapter 13).

Promote micro-credit programmes for women!

Micro-credit programmes should be promoted to serve joint humanitarian and developmental goals. In the context of such programmes, international lenders should continue to address needs of disadvantaged groups of women. Micro-credit programmes in peacebuilding environments also have great therapeutic value through the informal interactions they trigger at the community level (Chapter 3).

Support land and property rights for women!

Peacebuilding leaders often fail to consider the difficulties women face in accessing resources, including their property and land rights. These deserve priority treatment, as in most agricultural societies gender equality in access to land, water and other resources holds the key to women's survival. In this context, the international community and national actors should monitor the implementation of constitutional and legislative reforms, encourage initiatives designed to build public support for women's

property rights and support actions to resolve bureaucratic inertia and confrontation (Chapter 3).

Integrate women in post-conflict security institutions!

Established good practices for increasing the recruitment, retention and advancement of women in security institutions include the comprehensive integration of gender issues into reform processes. This includes specific measures that focus on recruitment, retention and advancement, as well as support for female staff associations, raising public awareness on the role of women in the security sector and training female personnel to speak at schools and with the media (Chapter 13).

To create equitable institutions it is necessary not merely to focus on female security personnel, but also to include initiatives directed at male security personnel and oversight bodies. Building the capacity of oversight institutions to demand and monitor female recruitment, retention and advancement should be a priority. Ensuring that male security personnel are informed and trained on institutional gender policies is crucial. Senior management must also take the responsibility to enforce these policies and create a healthy work environment free of impunity. Enlisting high-ranking male security personnel as gender champions, advocates and trainers is thus a particularly useful practice (Chapter 13).

Ensuring that DDR processes incorporate female ex-combatants and women and girls associated with the fighting forces opens up an avenue to recruit trained women for new security sector positions. It is therefore important that DDR and security sector reform processes, if not already approached as complementary and highly interlinked activities, are well coordinated – and that they are more gender-sensitive (Chapter 13).

Human resource policies and practices should be reviewed and made as woman- and family-friendly as possible, including through the availability of flexible work hours, part-time and job sharing, daycare and school facilities, transportation, nursing areas, access to psychological support and paid maternity and paternity leave. Logistics and equipment also need to be available for women, including separate and adequate numbers of bathrooms and appropriate uniforms and equipment (Chapter 13).

Addressing war and post-war trauma

Recognize the role of faith-based institutions in helping traumatized populations!

International and national actors need to consider supporting traditional approaches and institutions that deal with psychological traumas experi-

enced by women, men, girls and boys. Traumas can lead to highly destructive behaviour towards oneself, the immediate family and community and society at large. In this context, local religious beliefs and value systems have customarily provided consolation to suffering populations and should be consulted and utilized (Chapters 3 and 12). However, one must be careful not to harm women's positions by strengthening traditional actors who use their post-conflict activities to reinforce discriminatory practices. It is important to ensure that the goals and objectives of post-conflict actions are correctly understood by local communities. Lack of expertise and respect for the local culture may undermine the fragile trust generated within a traumatized society. In some cases local people also fear proselytizing motives behind external activities. As Sharipova and De Soto report in Chapter 7, in Tajikistan, for instance, men were concerned that the purpose of a particular project was to convert women to Christianity.

Especially in male-dominated societies, support groups among women are time-tested institutions that offer invaluable opportunities to share problems and experiences. Such groups provide joint psychological support and need to be permitted to engage with women on issues that concern their existential needs and concerns (Chapters 3, 5 and 11).

Build coalitions to transform and prevent violent conflict!

Post-war activities should pay attention to proactive approaches to conflict prevention in fragile societies. The tremendous challenges of rebuilding post-war societies serve as reminders of the costs incurred in waiting for conflicts to erupt and picking up the pieces afterwards. Efforts and commitments towards conflict prevention are necessary to avoid the escalation of an intractable spiral of violence and destruction. As a logical consequence, all women and men, young and old, in affected societies should unite, build new coalitions and organize within social movements, civil society organizations or political parties to prevent violence, transform conflict and, in the aftermath of war, create conditions for avoiding its repetition.

Support greater participation of adult and young men!

Gender divides and inequalities can be narrowed only if both women and men join in advocacy and awareness-raising activities. In particular, involving more men, especially gender-sensitive men, in consultations and initiatives that promote women's peace and security and address sexual violence is a crucial requirement for converting the challenges of victimhood into opportunities for leadership (Chapter 10).

Recommendations for international, state and local actors

After these more general recommendations, which focus mainly on themes and actions, the following recommendations are directed at actors that can facilitate positive change towards more sensible and just treatment and opportunities for empowerment and participation of women in post-conflict processes.

International community

United Nations and Security Council

The United Nations is often criticized for – and is in fact guilty of – ongoing gender imbalances among UN country-specific special representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSGs). In 2009 women held only two of the 40 posts of SRSG.[1] Moreover, in 2011 only three out of 14 peacekeeping missions were headed by female SRSGs, while only 45 out of a total of 138 UN resident representatives were women.[2] Particularly where sexual violence – direct and structural violence – is a major and complex challenge, advisers on gender-based violence should be deployed as part of peacekeeping missions, as has been done for instance in the Mission of the UN Organization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Chapter 10), and should be properly funded to do their work. Where possible and feasible, conduct and discipline departments or units should be included in existing and future peacekeeping missions.

Particularly as time passes and SCR 1325 becomes more of a historic document, with fewer specific advocacy events and activities, its main messages might become forgotten and the presumption that they have been mainstreamed might turn out to be false. It is thus important to develop and enforce strong accountability systems for the monitoring and evaluation of SCRs 1325 and 1820 and all subsequent resolutions on women's peace and security issues, as called for by the Secretary-General. Planning for peace support operations and other field missions should demonstrate a familiarity with SCR 1325 and its interpretation. This should be demonstrated at all stages, including pre-mission planning, during the mission and in post-mission reporting. It should also be the norm in cases where the United Nations acts as a transitional authority. Of particular importance is the integration of women's perspectives and a fair and equitable gender balance in the make-up of missions, setting positive examples for national counterparts.

Special attention should be given to avoiding the pitfalls of many designated "gender units". As mentioned above, in some cases the establishment of weak gender units in peacekeeping missions or national and

local governments may in fact lead to the marginalization of issues related to the support and empowerment of women, thus "wasting" the potential that was generated with the designation of such units for advancing women's concerns in peace operations.

Ensuring national-level adherence to gender-equal practices includes development, consultation and agreement of standards of excellence for future national action plans (NAPs). Such standards could result from research and analysis into the impact of NAPs and may generate political will to replicate helpful practice in context-specific NAPs already in operation (Chapter 10).

Systematic conduct and improvement of gender and socio-economic analyses of post-conflict societies, as well as methodological development, collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators, remain important issues. Gender-sensitive peacebuilding strategies depend on the thorough analysis of reliable and systematically collected gender-disaggregated data (Chapter 10).

Bilateral and multilateral actors, including regional organizations

It is particularly important to engage civil society actors in consultative processes during the planning of peacebuilding programmes. This will help support local and national ownership of the implementation of and follow-up to sustainable efforts, without which real change is difficult to achieve. In this context, the contributions by individual women and women's organizations will be crucial. It would also be helpful to integrate issues of violence against – and security for – women in early warning and response mechanisms by multilateral organizations, or ensure that national efforts are ready and willing to respond to escalating levels of violence against women in a preventive fashion.

International actors can serve as models of coalition-building and co-operation with each other and with national and local actors. Humanitarian actors, for instance, are often on the ground before and during a conflict, and are also among the first international actors present, addressing society's most immediate survival needs, once official fighting has halted. They are thus best placed to expand and deepen the collaborative efforts initiated before and during the conflict with civil society actors from the society they serve. Particularly as part of their work with women, they should be among the first to champion and promote women's rights and ensure that women are an inherent component of all short- and long-term assistance strategies.

There are also a number of post-conflict challenges that necessitate regional approaches by national actors, including those directly affecting the situation of women. In Central Asia, for instance, women and children are illegally trafficked to Russia. Tracking, countering and mitigating

such crimes require close collaboration among regional, national and international actors (Chapters 4 and 7).

Development donor community

The development donor community is well advised to increase its support to women's organizations and recognize this work as being political, not just immediate service provision. Aid offered to war-torn societies needs to take into consideration women's human rights violations, government accountability and responsiveness and the involvement of civil society groups in promoting, advancing and maintaining increased participation of women in setting and implementing post-conflict peacebuilding agendas. In addition to incentives for post-conflict governments to create space for the activities of such organizations, a coherent policy of conditionality should entice national and local governmental and non-governmental authorities to support vulnerable groups as active agents of peace and draw on their advice and active contribution (Chapter 11). Women's organizations need to be recognized as an integral part of externally driven efforts to rehabilitate and reconstruct post-conflict societies (Chapter 3). Direct funding should be made available to such groups. However, long-term dependence of these organizations and their activities on external sources of aid should be avoided (Chapter 8). Women's organizations also need to be given the government's assurance that they will not be sanctioned for accepting financial support from external sources and for possibly challenging prevailing cultural and social norms that limit women's rights, freedoms and opportunities to play active peacebuilding roles.

Donors should work with national and local governments in developing mechanisms to support grassroots peacebuilding initiatives that help women leave their victimhood behind and take substantial control of their own futures (Chapters 8 and 11).

Funding should reflect women-sensitive budgeting: aid programmes should show that women are intended to be among the major beneficiaries of peacebuilding projects in war-torn societies. Sufficient and sustainable funds must be set aside specifically for women's peace initiatives (Chapter 10).

Organizations that receive funding need to understand that the inclusion of women at every level of their staff and board is required in order to ensure that these women have the support of other women and women's organizations and are not merely considered as token representatives put in place "to look good but keep quiet" (Chapter 2; also Chapter 11).

Once targeted programme support has been implemented, aid effectiveness and outcomes should be monitored and evaluated by inter-

national and national actors, with the assistance of beneficiaries. There are high risks that funds for women are misused in post-conflict reconstruction, do not reach their intended audiences or support ineffective programmes designed without the input of women peacebuilders. Particularly large multi-donor programmes should conduct needs assessments of all community-based peace initiatives and identify those that would benefit from more flexible, untied donor support (Chapter 8).

State actors

International peace operations can have a strong imprint on post-conflict societies. Through their programmes and activities they impart values and practices that may be new to their host societies. Strengthening the roles of women in active participation in rebuilding post-war societies may be among the more drastic suggestions made by international actors accompanying initial peacebuilding efforts. It is thus particularly important that international peace missions practise what they preach – including their own treatment and involvement of women in field operations. The gender balance in peacekeeping missions must therefore be strengthened and pre-deployment gender training for all peacekeepers should be provided at the national level before individuals are sent on bilateral, regional or international missions (Chapter 13).

The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness highlighted the need for greater coordination in gender-equality programming among humanitarian actors.[3] The equal participation of women in all aspects of humanitarian response, their access to capacity-building and employment, and more accountability for gender mainstreaming within humanitarian missions should be ensured. Research on humanitarian and other peace operations should focus on the systematic collection of gender and gender-disaggregated data, then redesign existing programmes and practices and ensure that new activities are gender-sensitive from the start.

National action plans reflect serious attempts to implement new international agreements or practices (such as the principles enshrined in SCR 1325). The process for the development of NAPs must match the needs and capacities of the country and its current situation. Their contents must reflect the specifically solicited and expressed needs of society. NAPs need to be owned and implemented by as many actors in government and civil society as possible in order to drive and sustain their implementation (Chapter 10). Ideally, such processes are consultative, inclusive and participatory, and organized as bottom-up as well as top-down exercises. They should be driven by mechanisms such as a working group with the participation of all relevant stakeholders involved in their implementation. The working group needs to guide and inform the

process. Moreover, NAPs need to be visionary yet realistic, with firm timeframes, accountability mechanisms, outputs, performance indicators and a sufficient budget (Chapter 10).

Civil society organizations

In post-war environments, emerging civil society organizations face numerous unique problems and a lack of credibility (and track record) when working with donors and the local population alike. Some local NGOs are phantom organizations without specific directions and goals, serving primarily the private interests of their founders while consuming donor funds that could possibly be invested more effectively in the interest of intended beneficiaries. It is thus not easy for an NGO quickly to establish a reputation as a respectable and credible actor. This also applies to women's groups and other civil society organizations dedicated to equitable and inclusive peacebuilding. NGOs must therefore improve their capacity and legitimacy – towards the society which they serve and the donors on whose support they depend – in part with the assistance of international actors (Chapter 6).

If at all possible, civil society organizations need to involve men, especially gender-sensitive men, in consultations and initiatives that affect women's peace and security. This applies in particular to issues of sexual violence of all types, as men are both perpetrators and, more often than usually recognized, victims of such violence. It is important to note that neither SCR 1325 nor SCR 1820 is a gender-divisive tool. Instead they are intended to be inclusive and involve all relevant stakeholders, both men and women, in solutions and programmes that are designed to improve women's peace and security and their involvement in sustainable development (Chapter 10).

Civil society organizations should be involved – and should be ready to assist – in consultations on the development and implementation of national action plans. Ideally, they will be in a position to develop alternative reports, offer constructive advice on developing locally relevant NAPs and assist in monitoring their implementation (Chapter 10).

With proper support, including of their political analysis and work, civil society organizations can also serve as pools of future political leaders. This is the case particularly during the immediate post-conflict formation of a new political elite that does not merely resemble a new configuration of wartime elites, but consists of educated and committed persons, both women and men, without direct links to (or even in opposition to) the former conflict parties. In addition, the recruitment of political leaders and their more immediate staff from civil society organizations, particularly grassroots groups, will ensure that voices from civil society are car-

ried into positions of social, economic and political power. They will assure that peacebuilding efforts are relevant to the needs of society and will positively impact all parts of the population regardless of their previous ability to exert influence and have their opinions heard and needs considered. It is likely that the wishes and expectations of previously marginalized groups will be heard much more prominently in decision-making circles if represented by civil society organizations that can now place some of their own in positions of power. Such empowerment can lead to greater governmental awareness of what really matters locally and is expected by the population.

There is, however, one important caveat. One has to be careful not to siphon off all gifted, progressive, well-educated and networked individuals from civil society organizations to work for foreign NGOs or serve in government positions, parliament, security and justice institutions, educational facilities, private companies and any other institution where individuals who are ready and willing to embrace new thinking are a sought-after commodity. This would be detrimental to the creation and consolidation of a functioning and influential civil society during the critical post-conflict years. Foreign NGOs and international missions in particular need to be careful to avoid fuelling a domestic brain-drain that attracts capable nationals away from local NGOs and state institutions by offering higher salaries and privileges than the local market can bear. In addition to aligning international organizations' wages to local levels, it may be necessary to offer special funds to public institutions and local civil society organizations to enable them to pay competitive wages (Chapter 5). Such financial support should be accompanied by demands to pay fair and equal wages to both women and men.

Civil society groups may be in a privileged position to initiate and invest in the creation and expansion of South-South networks of other organizations operating in societies which have experienced or are currently undergoing similar post-conflict transitions. This allows for the exchange of experiences; it may also be useful in pursuing cross-border Track II diplomacy and fostering a common approach to understanding and embracing women's peacebuilding roles in post-conflict contexts. Such coalitions and networks can serve as collective voices to express a common concern for promoting change – and a platform to unofficial Track II diplomacy across borders in contexts where official relations prove to be difficult to establish for reasons that may pre-date or were created by the armed conflict. Moreover, individual, often small, local organizations tend to accomplish much less than well-respected and connected coalitions of NGOs with a well-developed and coherent strategy, adequate resources, members' consensus on objectives and clearly articulated and defined goals and aims. There are great advantages in exchanging information,

building coalitions, developing common strategies or linking various groups with similar objectives with one another (Chapter 10).

Religious leaders in particular can be either progressive or reactionary forces in transformation and peacebuilding dynamics in post-conflict societies, particularly if conflicts were fought at least in part over religious convictions. Religious leaders may thus be very influential and should be consulted and engaged in discussions on, for instance, SCRs 1325 and 1820. They should be offered training opportunities on how these resolutions could be used to foster peace and justice at the community and national levels (Chapter 10).

Research community

Many of the calls and suggestions for improvements in the way peacebuilding activities should embrace contributions of women and prepare the path for a more representative and inclusive and less discriminatory society that is responsive to the needs of all its members are based on thorough research, analysis and evidence-based argument. Patriarchal argumentation that has withstood the test of years, decades and centuries may be easy to challenge, yet hard to change. Thorough research into gender-related post-conflict challenges will detail the specific needs of women, but may also unearth previously neglected needs of men. It will support efforts to link specific, gender-disaggregated threat analyses with the most relevant and potentially effective responses. It will show that women's experiences during times of peace and times of conflict are as valuable as those of men in generating critical competencies as peacebuilders, and they can serve as active contributors to post-conflict state- and community-building efforts. Moreover, thorough research will show how both women and society overall will benefit from putting an equal share of post-conflict decision-making and leadership responsibility in the hands of women.

Well-conducted gender analysis can lead to more appropriate programme planning and implementation. Furthermore, research informs – and improves – training. For instance, gender analysis training programmes among police in Cambodia led to new police initiatives to address domestic violence and trafficking in women (Chapter 2). Research also allows a fair examination of the contributions and pitfalls of traditional and customary practices – and the advantages and disadvantages of supporting or opposing such practices during the (partial) redefinition of post-conflict values, norms and practices. Particularly during transition periods in which highly fragile state and society structures need to grow into structures that are self-sustainable, it is important to identify and draw on the support of local patterns or cultures of peace and par-

ticipation that reflect traditions of mutual support and – quite often – the very central role occupied by women. However, again one needs to be cautious: while some traditional cultures, norms and practices offer innovative solutions, others, such as customary law in Burundi that impedes women's access to land and property ownership, further cement discriminatory and counterproductive practices (Chapter 5). Moreover, as Vanessa Farr observes in Chapter 11, growing religious conservatism may play a significant role in undermining women's activism.

In search of post-war or pre-war identities, some groups of women are manipulated by conservative opinion leaders into accepting traditional hierarchical relationships between the sexes and their victimhood status. For example, when traditions of early and plural marriages, restricted access to education and training and everyday victimization of children and women by both men and women are presented as religious or ethnic customs, great care should be taken in confronting such arguments and practices; they should be questioned, critically examined and openly discussed. Ideally, such customs can be successfully challenged – and changed. Further research may reveal a multilayered picture of gender inequalities in the post-war patriarchy and suggest solutions to reduce gender exclusions and inequalities.

Concluding thoughts: Seizing the post-conflict moment

As the first chapter argued, post-conflict situations offer numerous opportunities for rewriting traditional "rules" and behavioural patterns that would likely continue to determine the roles of women in post-war societies if not challenged during the formative days, months and years following the cessation of armed violence and the onset of building (and in a few cases "rebuilding") a society founded on the promotion of positive peace. Social, cultural, economic and political justice changes the way in which communities and population groups relate to each other. This of course includes the relationship between men and women – a relationship that was often neither just nor equal prior to the outbreak of violent conflict. Yet wars change geopolitical and cultural landscapes, and also the way communities and individuals interact with and are positioned relative to one other. They may show that prevailing attitudes, norms and practices are counterproductive to social peace, stability and well-being.

Post-conflict societies need to change much of what has defined them before and during the outbreak of violence if they intend to live a more peaceful and stable future life. This does not merely mean that injustices suffered during the war need to be addressed. Of course, war creates much suffering – increasingly so among civilians, and disproportionately

among women. Post-conflict peacebuilding programmes have to address and redress these tragedies, assist victims in overcoming their suffering and prevent the abuses from happening again, in times of conflict and of peace. However, this book challenges the popular assumption that women should be treated – and supported – only as victims. It offers a perspective of women as active and enthusiastic agents of change rather than passive and helpless victims. There is a growing understanding, from international to local levels, that women can turn the tide – and should be assisted in doing so by local, national and international actors – in converting the challenges of victimhood into new leadership opportunities. Recent research, advocacy work and policy statements and guidance are evidence of this positive and long-overdue development. We hope that this volume, and the lessons and recommendations it has produced, will help in maintaining this positive momentum by contributing to and triggering further debates in research, learning and policy design and implementation.

Notes

1. Steinberg, Donald (2009) "UN Resolution on Women, Peace and Security: Anniversary Worth Celebrating?", reprint of Reuter's article, 19 June, available at www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6166&l=1.
2. See Anstee, Margaret Joan (2011) "One Woman's Experience at the UN", *New World Online*, Summer, available at www.una.org.uk/new_world/summer2011/5-margaret_anstee.html. See also Anstee, Margaret Joan (2004) *Never Learn to Type: A Woman at the United Nations*, London: John Wiley & Sons.
3. See World Bank (2008) "Aid Effectiveness: A Progress Report – On Implementing the Paris Declaration", World Bank, Accra, available at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTCDRC/Resources/Progress_Report_Full_EN.pdf.